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JUN 1 3 1996

DEPT. OF INSUHANCE DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE

In the Matter of Docket No. 95A-274-INS

DAN CALVIN VANDER MOLEN and DISCOUNT INSURANCE GROUP, INC. ORDER

Respondents.

On June 4, 1996, the Office of Administrative Hearings, through Administrative Law Judge Lewis D. Kowal, submitted "Recommended Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Recommended Order", a copy of which is attached and incorporated by this reference. The Director of the Arizona Department of Insurance has reviewed these recommendations, and enters the following order:

- The Recommended Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law are adopted except Recommended Findings 9, 28, 32, 49, which are rejected and replaced with the following:
- 9. The Department contends that the Agreement utilized by Respondents does not conform to Arizona's non-cancellation law set forth in A.R.S. §20-1631 et seq. Further, the Department contends that the language of the Agreement falsely represents the manner in which motor vehicle coverage may be canceled pursuant to Arizona law.
- 28. The Agreement Mr. Moore executed provided Discount with the authority to act on behalf of Mr. Moore with respect to the initial Nova application.
- 32. On February 23, 1994, Transwestern contacted Discount and requested that the Supplement be completed as to UM/UIM coverage. On May 13, 1994, Transwestern sent a letter to

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Discount stating that if a properly completed Supplement was not received by June 2, 1994, UM/UIM coverages would be added to the Northland policy and a premium would be billed as of the initial effective date of the policy. If Respondents believed that Transwestern and/or Northland could not legally effect this change, Respondents could have communicated this to Transwestern, Northland and/or Moore, but did not. The failure of Respondents to provide any response to the repeated requests from Transwestern resulted in the imposition of addition premium to the detriment of Mr. Moore.

49. Mr. Vander Molen believed Mr. Moore had insurance coverage at the time of the citation. However, the record reflects that Vander Molen made no effort to verify with Northland or Transwestern the existence of Moore's coverage prior to executing the letter. Vander Molen merely ascertained that the Northland policy had been issued, that premium had been paid and that Mr. Moore represented that he had not received a notice of cancellation. If Vander Molen believed that any attempted cancellation by Northland would have been legally invalid because proper notice was not given, his letter should have so stated. Rather, the letter written by Vander Molen was directed "To Whom it May Concern" and stated unconditionally that Moore had maintained coverage on the motorcycle since February 1, 1994. For Vander Molen to have written such a letter without having conducted even minimal research to verify the existence of coverage on the date of the citation was misleading.

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2. The insurance licenses of Respondents Dan Calvin Vander Molen and Discount Insurance Group, Inc., referred to in the Findings of Fact, are suspended for thirty (30) days;

- 3. Respondents Dan Calvin Vander Molen and Discount Insurance Group, Inc. are required to pay civil penalties to the Arizona Department of Insurance in the amount of \$2,500 each within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this order;
- 4. Respondents Dan Calvin Vander Molen and Discount Insurance Group, Inc. shall cease and desist from
- a. sharing commissions or compensation received as a result of insurance transactions with persons not licensed as an insurance agent, broker or solicitor and,
- b. using the Agreement of Coverages and Power of Attorney that do not conform with Arizona law.

NOTIFICATION OF RIGHTS

The aggrieved party may request a rehearing with respect to this Order by filing a written petition with the Office of Administrative Hearings within 30 days of the date of this Order, setting forth the basis for such relief pursuant to A.A.C. R20-6-114(B).

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The final decision of the Director may be appealed to the Superior Court of Maricopa County for judicial review pursuant to A.R.S. \$20-166.

DATED this 13th day of June, 1996.

CHRIS HERSTAM
Director of Insurance

COPY of the foregoing mailed/delivered this 18% day of June, 1996 to:

Office of Administrative Hearings c/o Lewis Kowal, Administrative Law Judge 1700 West Washington, Suite 602 Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Charles R. Cohen, Deputy Director Gregory Y. Harris, Executive Assistant Director Department of Insurance 2910 N. 44th St., Suite 210 Phoenix, Arizona 85018

Kathryn Leonard Assistant Attorney General 1275 West Washington Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Paul V. Bonn Bonn, Luscher, Padden & Wilkins 805 N. Second Street Phoenix, Arizona 85004

Kathering Linde

JUN 4 1996

IN THE OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS PIRECTOR'S OFFICE INSURANCE DEPT.

In the Matter of

DAN CALVIN VANDER MOLEN, and DISCOUNT INSURANCE GROUP, INC.,

Respondents.

No. 95A-274-INS

RECOMMENDED FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND RECOMMENDED ORDER

On February 27 and March 6, 1996, a hearing took place in the above-referenced matter. The record of this matter closed on May 10, 1996. Assistant Attorney General Kathryn Leonard appeared on behalf of the Arizona Department of Insurance ("Department"). Paul V. Bonn appeared on behalf of Respondents Dan Calvin Vander Molen ("Mr. Vander Molen") and Discount Insurance Group, Inc. ("Discount"), collectively referred to as Respondents.

Based upon the entire record, including all pleadings, motions, testimony, and exhibits, Administrative Law Judge Lewis D. Kowal prepared the following Recommended Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Recommended Order for consideration by the Director of the Department ("Director").

FINDINGS OF FACT

- 1. At all times material to this matter, Mr. Vander Molen was and is the holder of a life and disability agent license and a property and casualty agent and broker license in the State of Arizona.
- 2. At all times material to this matter, Discount was and is a corporation duly authorized to do business in the State of Arizona.
- 3. At all times material to this matter, Discount was and is the holder of a property and casualty agent and broker license in the State of Arizona.

- 5. Respondents routinely utilize an Agreement of Coverages (the "Agreement") which prospective insureds sign at the time they are applying for insurance coverage. The Agreement purportedly grants a Power of Attorney to the broker/agent to sign all applicable insurance and premium forms or related papers and to act on behalf of the prospective insured.
- 6. The Power of Attorney provided in the Agreement does not refer to any time frame or mention a particular insurer or application of insurance.
- 7. The evidence presented established that it is Discount's customary business practice to have a new Agreement executed each time an insured seeks a renewal or pursues a new application for insurance.
- 8. Upon consideration of the totality of the evidence presented, it is determined that the Power of Attorney relates to the specific insurance transaction being pursued at time of execution of the Agreement by the prospective insured.
- 9. The Department contends that the Agreement utilized by Respondents does not conform to Arizona's non-cancellation law set forth in A.R.S. § 20-631 <u>et seq.</u> Further, the Department contends that the language of the Agreement falsely represents the manner in which motor vehicle coverage may be canceled pursuant to Arizona law.
- 10. Respondents contend that the language in the Agreement is appropriate and complies with Arizona law. According to Respondents, the Agreement provides that if the proposed insured fails to pay the full or initial payment for insurance, the application for insurance and binder and not the insurance policy is void from its inception.

11. Respondents further contend that the Agreement is not a binder but intended to be an engaging agreement between a prospective insured and Discount.

- 12. Although Respondents claim the Agreement is not used as a binder, on its face, the Agreement appears to be a binder, though the identity of the insurer is not disclosed. Discount's agents insert in the space provided for binder numbers the last four digits of the insurance agent's social security number or the Agreement has a preprinted sequential number that bears no relationship to an application for insurance or an insurance policy. However, the insertion of a number in the space reserved for a binder number creates the appearance that the Agreement is a binder.
- 13. The Agreement states that "no coverage is in force without an approved binder number appearing in the space below". In addition to the binder number, the Agreement has a space where the date and time of the binder is to be inserted. Further, the Agreement sets forth the types and the amount of coverages accepted and the coverages declined. All of the aforementioned creates the appearance that the Agreement is a binder.
- 14. The Agreement misstates the law in Arizona regarding cancellation of coverage. A binder is terminated upon issuance of the policy applied for or 90 days from the binder's effective date, whichever occurs first. A.R.S. §20-1120. Notice requirements for cancellation of coverage are set forth in A.R.S. § 20-1632 which does not distinguish between policies and binders. Therefore, to effect cancellation of coverage, an insured must be notified of such cancellation in accordance with A.R.S. §20-1632. An insurer can make the effective date of a binder conditioned on payment for insurance. Statewide Ins. Corp. v. Dewar ,143 Ariz. 553, 694 P.2d 1167 (1984).
- 15. There was no evidence presented by Respondents that any of the insurance carriers with which Respondents had or have an agency relationship conditions the effective date of a binder upon full or initial payment for insurance.
- 16. There was no evidence presented that established that Discount was properly conditioning the effective date of coverage upon payment. Further, the

 language utilized in the Agreement is ambiguous. If, as Respondents assert, the binder is part of the application, it is unclear in the Agreement as to whether the application for an insurance policy, the binder portion of the application or the entire application which includes the application for an insurance policy and binder was intended to be voided from its inception.

- 17. On January 22, 1993, Discount accepted an insurance application and premium of \$345.00 from Casey Moore ("Mr. Moore"). At that time, Discount issued Mr. Moore a binder for motorcycle coverage with Nova Casualty Company ("Nova") through its managing general agent, Transwestern General Agency ("Transwestern"), on Mr. Moore's 1987 Yamaha motorcycle ("Yamaha").
- 18. At the time when Mr. Moore completed his application for coverage on the Yamaha, he signed the Agreement with Discount.
- 19. On December 1, 1993, Respondents mailed a renewal notice to Mr. Moore advising Mr. Moore that he could renew coverage on his Yamaha, subject to Nova's acceptance, by paying a \$229.00 renewal premium to Discount and executing a new Agreement before January 22, 1994.
- 20. Although A.R.S. §20-1632.01 provides for a seven-day grace period to renew an automobile liability policy after the expiration date of the existing policy, Transwestern's policy at the time in question was to allow nine days after the expiration date in which a Nova policy could be renewed by receipt of the renewal premium and notice of renewal.
- 21. On January 18, 1994, Mr. Moore tendered to Discount the \$229.00 premium to renew the Nova policy. At that time, Mr. Moore informed Discount that his mailing address had changed to P.O. Box 83862, Phoenix, AZ 85071. Mr. Moore did not execute a new Agreement with Discount at the time he submitted the \$229.00 renewal premium.

- 22. On February 1, 1994, Transwestern received from Discount, Mr. Moore's renewal request. At that time, Transwestern determined that the grace period had lapsed and that the renewal request for Mr. Moore was untimely.
- 23. On February 1, 1994, Transwestern forwarded a letter and a Northland Insurance Company ("Northland") application to Discount wherein Discount was advised that Transwestern could not renew Mr. Moore's Nova policy but suggested that Mr. Moore's policy be rewritten with Northland. At that time, Transwestern's relationship with Nova had changed so that Transwestern was not authorized to write new business with Nova but only authorized to renew Nova policies. Because Transwestern viewed Mr. Moore's renewal request as untimely, Transwestern determined it could neither renew Mr. Moore's Nova policy nor rewrite a Nova policy for Mr. Moore.
- 24. On behalf of Mr. Moore, Discount submitted to Transwestern a completed Northland insurance application which had the purported signature of Mr. Moore, although Mr. Moore did not complete, sign or authorize the completion and signature of his name to the Northland application. On behalf of Mr. Moore, Discount also submitted the \$189.00 premium to Transwestern to obtain insurance coverage on the Yamaha with Northland.
- 25. Discount also submitted a completed Motorcycle Application Supplement (the "Supplement") which gives the proposed insured the opportunity to accept or reject uninsured and underinsured motorist coverage ("UM/UIM"). The Supplement had the purported signature of Mr. Moore, although Mr. Moore did not complete, sign or authorize the completion and signature of his name to the Supplement.
- 26. Respondents assert that the Power of Attorney incorporated in the Agreement executed by Mr. Moore provided them with the authority to complete and sign insurance related documents including applications for insurance other than the initial Nova application. It is determined above in paragraph 8 that the Power of Attorney does not provide Respondents with such authority.

27. Mr. Moore credibly testified that at the time he executed the Agreement, he was not advised of the Power of Attorney clause.

- 28. The Agreement Mr. Moore executed provided Discount with the authority to act on behalf of Mr. Moore with respect to the initial Nova application. Mr. Moore and Discount failed to respond to Transwestern's letters and failed to forward a completed and signed Supplement which accepted or declined UM/UIM coverage.
- 29. Respondents contend that the Nova renewal application was submitted in a timely manner and should have been accepted by Transwestern. Therefore, Respondents argue that any acts occurring after the Nova renewal should not be considered because but for Transwestern's failure to accept the Nova renewal, the subsequent acts would not have occurred.
- 30. Respondent's argument set forth above in paragraph 29 is flawed for even if Transwestern's failure to accept the Nova renewal application was wrongful, that does not relieve Respondents from complying with the Arizona insurance laws for any subsequent action taken regarding Mr. Moore.
- 31. Mr. Moore was entitled to a return of \$40.00 as excess premium as of February 1, 1994, which sum represents the difference of the amount Mr. Moore had paid to renew insurance on the Yamaha with Nova and the premium actually paid to Northland. Discount returned that sum only after Mr. Moore had filed his complaint with the Department in November, 1995.
- 32. On February 23, 1994, Transwestern contacted Discount and requested that the Supplement be completed as to UM/UIM coverage. On May 13, 1994, Transwestern sent a letter to Mr. Moore with a copy to Discount stating that if a properly completed Supplement was not received by June 2, 1994, UM/UIM coverages would be added to the Northland policy and a premium would be billed as of the initial effective date of the policy.
- 33. On June 13, 1994, on behalf of Northland, Transwestern generated a General Change Endorsement ("Endorsement") to reflect the addition of UM/UIM

coverage to Mr. Moore's policy as of February 1, 1994. As a result of the added coverage, Transwestern billed Mr. Moore an additional premium of \$210.00 which was to have been paid by June 21, 1994.

- 34. Credible evidence was presented that Mr. Moore and Discount did not receive the Northland Notice of Endorsement or bill for additional premium.
- 35. Transwestern did not receive the additional premium of \$210.00 by June 21, 1994.
- 36. On July 7, 1994, Transwestern issued a cancellation notice of the Northland policy for nonpayment of the additional premium required by the Endorsement. The cancellation was effective July 19, 1994.
- 37. Transwestern mailed the cancellation notice to Mr. Moore at 4303 West Onx (sic), Glendale, AZ 85302, and not to his current mailing address at that time. A copy of the Cancellation Notice was mailed to Discount. Mr. Moore and Discount did not receive the Cancellation Notice. Therefore, Respondents did not take any action to secure insurance coverage for Mr. Moore's Yamaha and did not notify Mr. Moore of the cancellation of the Northland policy.
- 38. At the time, of submitting Mr. Moore's renewal application, Discount had notified Transwestern of Mr. Moore's change of mailing address. However, the Northland application which was completed and submitted to Transwestern only provided the street address of 4303 West Onyx, Glendale, Arizona 85302, where the Yamaha was located.
- 39. The Northland application does not specify whether the address should be the mailing address or physical address of where the motorcycle is located. Credible evidence was presented that Northland would not accept a post office address as the only address for an insured.
- 40. Respondents contend that by providing Transwestern with Mr. Moore's change of address regarding the Nova renewal that it had satisfactorily notified

Northland of Mr. Moore's correct mailing address because Transwestern acted as the managing general agent for both Nova and Northland.

- 41. Although Discount notified Transwestern as to Mr. Moore's change of mailing address as part of the Nova renewal process, Discount did not take appropriate measures in its submission of the Northland application to notify Northland that Mr. Moore's mailing address was different than the location that appeared on the Northland application.
- 42. Respondents contend that because the Northland policy was issued unconditionally with an offer of UM/UIM coverage, that Northland could not: a) unilaterally add those coverages; b) charge an additional premium; or c) cancel the policy for non-payment of that premium. Further, Respondents maintain that because the Northland policy was a direct billed policy, Northland and not Discount, had the responsibility for mailing out a Notice of Cancellation.
- 43. Discount's submission of a Northland application on behalf of Mr. Moore without his knowledge or consent changed the relationship Mr. Moore had with both Discount and Mr. Moore's insurer. Those relationships were changed so that Mr. Moore's motorcycle insurance became a direct billed policy rather than an agency billed policy. Instead of dealing directly with Discount, as Mr. Moore had done with the Nova policy, the Northland policy required that Mr. Moore deal directly with Northland concerning endorsements and payment.
- 44. It is not necessary to address the financial relationship between Mr. Moore, Northland and Transwestern nor determine whether Mr. Moore's Northland policy was improperly canceled because the Northland policy was a direct billed policy.
- 45. Mr. Moore credibly testified that on November 22, 1994, he was stopped twice by the Phoenix Police for driving the Yamaha with expired plates. Although Mr. Moore was not cited at the first stop, at the second stop, Mr. Moore was cited for not having insurance on the Yamaha. Mr. Moore first learned of Northland's cancellation of coverage as a result of the second stop.

- 46. The evidence presented shows that Mr. Moore's testimony as to the date of the occurrence is in error. However, there is no controverting evidence as to Mr. Moore's testimony of the events that occurred on the day of the citation.
- 47. As a result of being cited for not having insurance, Mr. Moore contacted the Respondents. Subsequently, in a telephone conversation Mr. Moore had with Mr. Vander Molen, Mr. Moore credibly testified that Mr. Vander Molen offered to draft a letter which would state that Mr. Moore had insurance in effect at that time provided Mr. Moore would sign up for 6 months of insurance with Discount.
- 48. Mr. Moore told Mr. Vander Molen to go ahead and write the letter but did not obtain further insurance through Mr. Vander Molen. Mr. Vander Molen contends that the letter was written to assist Mr. Moore because at that time neither Discount nor Mr. Moore had received proper notice of cancellation of the Northland policy. Therefore, Mr. Vander Molen believed that Mr. Moore had insurance coverage through Northland.
- 49. The evidence reflects that Mr. Vander Molen had a good faith basis to believe that Mr. Moore had insurance coverage at the time of the citation.
- 50. The Notice of Cancellation of the Northland policy was not sent by certified mail as required by A.R.S. §20-1632 nor was it ever received by Mr. Moore or Discount.
- 51. No credible evidence was presented as to exactly what Mr. Moore did with Mr. Vander Molen's letter.
- 52. From August, 1993 through either December, 1995 or January, 1996, Respondents paid a \$20.00 fee to automobile salesmen for referring insurance purchasers to Discount who required financing of their insurance policy.
- 53. From August, 1993 through either December, 1995 or January, 1996, Discount received \$10.00 from Dwight Financial ("Dwight") for each insurance policy that Discount forwarded to Dwight for financing. Each \$10.00 fee received from Dwight was placed into Discount's Marketing Plus Account.

- 54. The \$20.00 fees Discount paid to the automobile salesmen for referring insurance purchasers who required financing of their insurance policies were paid from the Marketing Plus Account.
- 55. The monies Discount paid the auto salesmen for forwarding prospective insureds for policies to be financed constitutes commission or compensation as a result of transactions conducted under Respondents' insurance licenses.
- 56. Although Respondents contend that Discount was referring financing matters other than insurance to Dwight, the evidence presented established that the only matters Discount referred to Dwight for financing were insurance policies.
- 57. Credible evidence was presented at the hearing that during the relevant time, Mr. Vander Molen controlled the operation of Discount and that Discount's employees acted under and pursuant to Mr. Vander Molen's direction.
- 58. Pursuant to A.R.S. § 20-295, in order for a corporation to be licensed as a broker, one individual in each office or place where insurance is transacted is to represent the corporation and be individually licensed. A.R.S. §20-316 provides that a corporation's license may be suspended or revoked for any causes related to the individual designated on the corporation's license to exercise the corporation's powers. Therefore, all of the aforementioned acts of Discount or its employees are also attributable to Mr. Vander Molen.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

- 1. Respondents received notice of this proceeding as prescribed by A.R.S. §20-163 and 41-1061.
- 2. The Director has jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to A.R.S. §20-161.
- 3. There is insufficient evidence in the record to find that Respondents' conduct, as set forth above in the Findings of Fact, constitutes a record of dishonesty in business or financial matters within the meaning of A.R.S. §20-290(B)(2).

- 4. Respondents' conduct, as set forth above in the Findings of Fact, constitutes the existence of any cause for which original issuance or any renewal of an insurance license could have been refused such that Respondents' licenses may be suspended or revoked pursuant to A.R.S. §20-316(A)(1), together with 20-290(B)(2).
- 5. There is insufficient evidence in the record to find that Respondents' conduct as set forth above in the Findings of Fact, constitutes a willful violation of, or willful noncompliance with, any provision of this title, or any lawful rule, regulation or order of the director in violation of A.R.S. §20-316(A)(2).
- 6. Respondents' conduct as set forth above in the Findings of Fact with respect to Mr. Moore's \$40.00 excess premium, constitutes misappropriation or conversion to their own use or illegal withholding of monies belonging to policyholders, insurers, beneficiaries or others and received in or during the conduct of business under the license or through its use in violation of A.R.S. §20-316(A)(4).
- 7. Respondents' conduct as set forth above in the Findings of Fact, with respect to the utilization of the Agreement of Coverages form, including the Power of Attorney incorporated in that document and the submission of Mr. Moore's Northland application for insurance, constitutes a conduct of affairs under the licenses showing the Respondents to be incompetent or a source of injury and loss to, or repeated complaint by, the public or any insurer in violation of A.R.S. §20-316(A)(7).
- 8. Respondents' conduct as set forth above in Paragraphs 52-55 of the Findings of Fact, constitutes the sharing of commissions or other compensation received on account of transactions under a license with any person not also licensed as an agent, broker, or solicitor under this article in violation of A.R.S. §20-311(B).
- 9. The Respondents' conduct as set forth above in the Findings of Fact, constitutes the misrepresentation of the terms of any policy issued or to be issued or the benefits or advantages promised or the dividends or share of the surplus to be received in violation of A.R.S. §20-443(A).

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- Based upon the above Findings of Fact the Director has the authority to 10. suspend, revoke or refuse to renew Respondents' insurance licenses, impose a civil penalty upon Respondents and/or order restitution, pursuant to A.R.S. §20-316(A) and 20-316(C).
- 11. The Director has the authority to order Respondents to cease and desist violations of A.R.S. §20-443, and impose a civil penalty upon Respondents pursuant to A.R.S. §20-456.

RECOMMENDED ORDER

Based upon the above, the undersigned Administrative Law Judge recommends that Respondents Dan Calvin Vander Molen and Discount Insurance Group, Inc., each, be suspended for thirty (30) days and each be required to pay a civil penalty to the Department in the amount of \$2,500.00 within thirty (30) days of the effective date of the Director's Order. It is further recommended that the Respondents, Dan Calvin Vander Molen and Discount Insurance Group, Inc., cease and desist from: a) sharing commissions or compensation received as a result of insurance transactions with persons not licensed as an insurance agent, broker or solicitor, and b) using the Agreement of Coverages and Power of Attorney unless they conform with Arizona law.

Done this 31st day of May, 1996.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE

Copy of the foregoing mailed/delivered this 3/5 day of May, 1996, to:

Chris Herstam, Director Arizona Department of Insurance 2910 North 44th Street, Suite 210

Phoenix, AZ 85018

95A-274-INS